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FOUR MONTHS IN THE COUNTRY by Kiang Wen-han (concluded)

6. Free Food - A Great Accomplishment

The distribution system, since the establishment of the Commune, has been a combination of the work compensation and the necessity supply systems. In the past farmers were paid according to their recorded days of labor, but now the system has been changed to take account of their skill, strength and general attitude toward labor, and to put them into different classes accordingly. So this system is still by its nature the socialistic one of "To each according to his work," rather than the communistic one of "To each according to his need."

From January 1 of this year the Liberation People's Commune has put the Free Food System into effect. Besides what people receive from their labor, they get their food free. This is in accordance with the Communistic principle of "To each according to his need." The food is free, it is all the same, whether much or little is eaten, and no matter how many mouths there are in the family in comparison to the number of workers. So on this point the true communistic principle is now in effect. This ration principle will be enlarged in scope as production increases.

Free Food is an entirely new thing in China. For thousands of years the great mass of farmers in China have gone hungry. "Within the vermilion gate (among the gentry) they stink with meat and wine, on the road they die of cold and hunger." Is that not the tragedy of the past? It is only under the enlightened leadership of the Party and Chairman Mao that this guarantee of livelihood could be obtained. So the people deeply appreciate that this great accomplishment was not easily come by.

7. The Democratic Attitude of the Cadres

The first task of the investigation team was to investigate the prevalence of the "three airs" and the "five tempers" among the cadres, because when these exist they are a great hindrance to close relations between the Party and the People. Where this relationship is not good it is impossible to attain the Great Leap Forward in production. The Communist Party (in the 6th session of the 8th Central Committee) has recently stated, "The line which the Party follows in its work with the People is to foster life within the Commune." This is very true.

According to my four months' experience in the country, I can say that a democratic spirit among the cadres is the regular thing, and that the three airs and five tempers when they do occur are immediately reproved and corrected. First, they all, from the Committee Secretary to the important cadres of the larger, medium or smaller teams, live very simply, and have no

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bureaucratic airs. The upper grade cadres customarily ride their own bicycles to the fields to direct the work. At Machiako the Secretary of the Communist Party regular takes part with the people in the field work. The present rule is that all middle grade cadres must work half day in the fields.

The Government's concern today is the best interests of the People, how to raise the living standards of the People. In all the meetings I attended, whether local, village or county, the chief subject of discussion was how to raise production; in production and the Great Leap Forward the cadres always take the lead.

Because of the diligent work of the cadres, the accomplishments of Party leadership have been remarkable. This is especially seen in the doubling of agricultural production. For example in cotton production at Tsungts'un, the 1957 figure was 80 lbs. per mou, the 1958 figure an increase of from one to two times. The farmers said that the 1958 cotton yield in the poorest fields was higher than the 1957 yield in the best fields. Of vegetables the 1957 average yield was from 20 to 30 loads per mou; in 1958 this was increased from two to three times. For the whole of the area of this Commune the 1958 cotton yield averaged 300 lbs. per mou, and the vegetable yield 150 loads per mou.

The work of the cadres is varied and heavy. Besides planning and directing the field work from season to season, there are other types of work which they have to accomplish within a limited time. For example last August when we first arrived there, the Party Committee was demanding that farm methods be changed by the introduction of some new machinery. In the middle of September they were demanding the introduction of gas, so that kerosene would no longer be needed for lighting, and the dining halls would also use gas. At the same time they had to fight the drouth in industry by continuing to provide 100,000 tons of steel. Just before Independence Day there was a public health campaign to wipe out the Seven Evils; the cadres have to wipe out illiteracy within a given period, -- and so it goes. To complete all these varied tasks, not merely thinking of one task at a time, is certainly not easy. Sometimes the cadres start out strict but end up easy-going, or are good at announcing a new program but not good in following up, so that they are guilty of over-simplification, but this is not often found--not more than one in ten are like this, and even they are soon corrected by their superiors.

In December of 1957 a number of down-graded (hsia fang: "Down-graded" is the translation used by the Hong Kong Consulate General for this phrase, but a more neutral interpretation might be simply that they are "sent down") cadres came to the country--37 to Tsung ts'un and 5 to Machiako. They were looked upon as "new members", but they lived and ate and worked with the old members and were of great assistance. Since they were of a higher cultural level, many of them quickly took places of leadership, so that much of the government, cultural and public health work was entrusted to them. It seems to me that the Great Leap Forward of last year and this down-grading of cadres were inseparable parts of the same plan. These down-graded cadres not only constituted an army of government workers, cultural workers, but also of laborers; they have all learned the techniques of production, and whether in field or pigpen they work alongside the farmers. It is true that some just wanted to be bosses, some acted as though they were guests, and did not enter contentedly into the work, there were some whose attitude was not good, and some who because of their own faults did not get along well with the farmers, but these were isolated cases, and especially after the rectification campaign of last October the spirit among the down-graded cadres changed very materially.

8. The True Liberation and Development of the Workers

A little over seven years ago I spent three months in the country on the Land Reform program. (This experience Mr. Kiang reported in a four page article in Tien Feng for September 30, 1951.) At that time we were carrying on a struggle with the feudalistic landlords, and giving the farmers a new place in government. This time in my four months in the country I have taken part in the great revolutionary step of setting up a commune. I have learned to appreciate the diligent and thrifty character of the farmers, and have personally witnessed their remarkable energy in increasing production. I fully realize that it is only under the correct leadership of the Party and Chairman Mao that the great mass of peasantry, ground down by several thousand years of oppression, could have emerged into a significant place in society. And I realize further that it is only through the establishment of communes that we can make the transition to a true communistic society according to the principle "From each according to his ability, to each according to his need."

Thirty years ago I took part as a student in the Chinese Christian Student Movement. This Movement took as its standard, "Based on the spirit of Jesus, let us create a youth organization, establish strong character, carry out a revolution, and plan for the liberation and development of the livelihood of the people." That empty dream was entirely in the realm of Reformism (that is, the heresy - from the Communist standpoint - that reform without revolution is possible), and since the Christianity of that day, in both finances and thinking, was under the control of imperialism, so no matter what kind of a "movement" we tried to initiate, we still remained in the diabolical clutches of imperialism.

But now since Liberation, the life of the mass of working people has been revolutionized under the leadership of the Communist Party, and has attained that "liberation and development" that we only talked about. The accomplishments of the Communist Party are not just in the material realm, but also in the humanistic. Their concern for production is also a concern for livelihood, for the purpose of the former is to raise the level of the latter. And the more concern they show for the livelihood of the farmer, the more energy the farmer shows in production. The Party does not want, as imperialism falsely charges, to make slaves of the farmers, but to get them to live the life of a man, to eat better, to sleep better, to raise good children, to be happy and comfortable in spirit, to have energy for a still greater Leap Forward in production, and to lead a rich and varied life.

Shortly after I returned from the country the Soviet universe fire-arrow was sent into space. This earth-shaking event made me realize still more that only the leadership of the Communist Party could have achieved this. Soviet scientists have been able to put a projectile weighing almost a ton and a half into orbit around the sun, thereby leaving American scientists far in the rear. The laborers of our country under Communist Party leadership are also going forward with the speed of that projectile, releasing sputniks on every battle line, so that within a short time we may well overtake and surpass the capitalistic countries, and wipe out the humiliation of the past. We should therefore earnestly and sincerely accept the leadership of the Communist Party, reform our own thinking, and along with our 600 million comrades nerve ourselves to press forward and take positive part in the high tide of socialist construction.

STATISTICS

How reliable are the production statistics with which Communist news reports are studded? An article written last December by a harassed statistical secretary in Wuhu suggests that his reports are coming in from blood brothers of the preachers who used to provide headaches for the statistical secretaries of church conferences. He complains of the following defects: "Reports are not submitted on time, statistical data are not exact, frequently the data supplied today and the data supplied yesterday contradict each other." He goes on to give one example. One village on November 6 reported 2, 124 mou of late crops, and on November 8 they suddenly changed the figure to 518 mou. He asks, "How can such statistical figures be used?"

CHURCH NEWS

Of the four churches still remaining open in Peking, we have already identified one as the Teng Shih Kou Church in the East City, and since a recent visitor to Peking speaks of a London Missionary Society chapel as open, it is likely that the Kang Wa Shih (Tile Market) Church in West City remains open.

It is reliably reported that there are four churches left in the three Wuhan cities.

Chinese Christian leaders in Hong Kong are reported to be more outspoken in their criticism of the Communist regime than at any time in the past.

A former missionary on the mainland, now in Hong Kong, after interviewing a recent arrival from Shanghai, has written: "A determined attempt is being made to destroy all forms of Christian fellowship outside of the strictly supervised services within the few remaining churches. Any young Christians who show zeal and love for Christ in their daily lives are likely to be arrested. There are some in prison who would be released if they would agree to give up praying. A large number of Christian young people have been sent to prison labor camps in various parts of the country. Many have been sentenced to from eight to fifteen years in these camps.

Y. T. Wu summed up the year 1958 for Christians as follows: "We Christians during the past year have been deeply disciplined. Through socialist education the clergy and the laity of the whole country have had their thinking raised to a new level; the rightists have been decisively defeated; the semi-colonial aspect of the church has been changed; and the Chinese Christian Church is now in process of shaking off the shackles of imperialism, and ready to advance on the road to socialism."

Church leaders in Shanghai held an informal discussion meeting on January 5, the ostensible occasion of which was to discuss the implications of the Soviet projectile into space. It is clear from the report, however, that the whole world-wide political situation was discussed. Each of the participant's contributions is summarized in the report - there is nothing unexpected in any of their remarks, but our readers will be interested in the list of those present and speaking. The 35 participants included the following: Y. T. Wu, Bishop Robin Chen, Rev. George Wu, Rev. Hsieh Yung-ch'in, Miss Cora Deng, Rev. Li Chu-wen, Kiang Wen-han, Miss Tso Fu-ju, Rev. Ch'i Ch'ing-ts'ai, Rev. Henry Sun, Rev. Shen I-fang (son of Bishop T. K. Shen), and Chester Miao.

NEWS FROM THE CATHOLIC PRESS

The three Catholic deputies in the new National People's Congress are Li Wei-kuang, Hu Wen-yao, and Tong Shao-sheng. The latter two are laymen. Li Wei-kuang is recognized by the patriotic church as archbishop of the Nanking arch-diocese, but he has been excommunicated by name by the Vatican. Hu is a layman of Chekiang who has been very active in the patriotic campaigns in the church. "He has been refused the sacraments since 1951." Tong is a layman of Szechuan, a director of a navigation company, and vice-governor of the province, but otherwise unknown in Catholic circles in Hong Kong.

Joseph Liu Nai-sheng, a former minor seminarian of the Seminary of Zikawei, who has already spent two years (1955-57) at forced labor in North Kiangsu, was arrested again recently and condemned to a further four years.

Under the heading "Paradoxical Position of Faithful Catholics", Hong Kong points out that in many places on the mainland, the refusal of Catholics to go to church is a mark of fidelity, showing their disavowal of the "patriotic" priests.

A recent foreign visitor to Canton could not find a single Catholic church that was open. "All were closed down because the priests that were in charge of them were working in a chemical plant."

A recent Catholic survey in the Union of South Africa showed a Chinese population of about 7,000, mostly in Johannesburg and Port Elizabeth. 70% speak Cantonese, the rest Hakka. About 10% are Catholics. Protestants belong either to the Church of England or to the Baptist Church - none to the Dutch Reformed.

Exiled Nanking Archbishop Paul Yu Pin was awarded the Korea Cultural Medal by President Syngman Rhee on May 19.

The Vatican has stated that in some places in China there is a campaign afoot to get priests to divulge what is told them in confession, "since there cannot be and should not be anything to conceal from the Communist Party." In the drive against "irrational Christian practices," it seems that the whole confessional system is being labeled "irrational".

GENERAL NEWS

Late Archaic Chinese is the name of a grammatical study produced by W.A.C.H. Dobson, and published by the University of Toronto Press. According to the announcement folder, it deals with the grammar of the texts of Mencius, Micius, Chuang-tzu and the Tso-chuan. From the two sample pages given, I should judge that it is a very technical volume, but will probably be welcomed by any who are making a serious study of Classical Chinese.

Shanghai, which as an administrative area includes considerable surrounding country, announced on May 10 that it is now self-sufficient in vegetable production. It expects to produce this year more than two million tons of vegetables from 41,000 hectares of land.

There is a large People's Liberation Army in Sinkiang, and it has been put to work on irrigation and farming projects. It is reported that by irrigation in the Tarim River Basin it has reclaimed 80,000 hectares of land, which are now producing grains, cotton, and vegetable oil crops.